UNITED NATIONS

DP

Executive Board of the United Nations Development Programme and of the United Nations Population Fund

Distr.
GENERAL

DP/CCF/NER/1
16 November 1998
ENGLISH
ORIGINAL: FRENCH

First regular session 1999
24-29 January 1999
Item 4 of the provisional agenda
UNDP

UNDP: COUNTRY COOPERATION FRAMEWORKS AND RELATED MATTERS

FIRST COUNTRY COOPERATION FRAMEWORK FOR THE NIGER 1999-2001

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INTRODUCTION

1. The first country cooperation framework (CCF) for the Niger covers the period 1999-2001. Because of the social and political situation prevailing between 1991 and 1995, which grew worse in 1996 with the military coup d'état in January of that year, preparation of the new UNDP programming cycle could not begin until 1997-1998. That being so, the Administrator of UNDP approved an extension of the fifth country programme for 1997 and requested a further extension for 1998 which was approved by the UNDP Governing Council in April 1998.

2. The CCF was developed during a broad concertation process between the national authorities and UNDP and began with the preparation of the national strategy note, approved in April 1997, which was developed using a participatory approach (Government, United Nations system, other partners in the development of the Niger, and civil society). The advisory note, drafted in consultation with the Government, was submitted to the latter in December 1997.

I. NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT SITUATION FROM A SUSTAINABLE HUMAN DEVELOPMENT PERSPECTIVE

3. The Niger is in the least developed country (LDC) category, with a 1996 per capita income estimated at $230. It is last but two in the world in terms of its human development index (HDI).

4. Two thirds of the population live in poverty and one third lives below the absolute poverty threshold. Poverty is essentially a rural phenomenon, but major centres of urban poverty continue to develop. The Niger has some of the world's worst life expectancy and morbidity indices. AIDS has not yet spread to the extent seen in some other countries (the seropositivity rate is estimated at 1 per cent), but it is increasing rapidly. The high death rate is associated particularly with the inadequacy of health services, to which only a third of the total population and less than a quarter of the rural population have access. The vast majority of the population are in a state of chronic malnutrition, and famines are frequent in pre-harvest periods. Scarcely half of all households have access to drinkable water, while sewerage, which is practically unheard of in rural areas, is available to only a small fraction of the urban population. Poverty is reflected also in the serious shortcomings of the education system: the school enrolment ratio is no more than 25 per cent on average, and is very often much lower in rural areas. Only 16 per cent of the population are literate.

5. The Niger's economy is so weak that sustained growth is not possible. The serious economic crisis the country has been experiencing since the beginning of the 1980s has led to a constant reduction in gross domestic product (GDP) and incessant impoverishment of the population. Although there has been some recovery since 1995, with population growth estimated at about 3.3 per cent each year, growth is still insufficient to provide any increase in real incomes. Competitiveness is stifled by the weakness of private enterprise and State intervention continues to weigh the economy down. The fact that Nigeria is

close by, which could be an asset as Niger is a potential market, is currently primarily a constraining factor, fostering the development of the informal market and causing a loss of tax revenue. The Niger was not able to deal efficiently with the sharp increase in the price of uranium, its principal export, or to make proper use of the resources that became available during the 1970s. The continuous decline in prices since the early 1980s has weighed heavily on Niger's terms of trade and on growth, and has given rise to a crushingly heavy debt burden.

6. The rapid growth of the population, attributable as much to poverty as to the cultural environment, militates greatly against opportunities for development. Unemployment and underemployment are at worryingly high levels, especially among young people, and crime rates are going up, particularly in urban areas.

7. Environmental degradation is locked in a vicious circle with increasing poverty and the population explosion. Population pressure and the use of inappropriate technologies are leading to overexploitation of soil and wood resources. The degradation of resources and their yields helps to worsen poverty. Furthermore, periods of drought persist, accelerating the desertification process, and water resource management is inadequate. The question of food security is crucial in a country where the survival of the majority of the population depends on the ability to produce food. Self-sufficiency is making no progress and there is a growing gap between what is available and what is needed.

8. The status of women in the Niger is cause for particular concern in terms of participation in the development process. Women are the poorest and most vulnerable population group. Cultural practices and the weight of customary law give rise to major inequalities in access to employment, property ownership and social services. Participation by women in public life remains very limited. Serious shortcomings persist in maternal and child health. With regard to education, no more than 12 per cent of women are literate and scarcely 20 per cent of girls attend school.

9. The management of public affairs, despite some recent progress, needs further improvement. The institutional framework continues to be marked by recurrent social and political tensions, inadequate management of public affairs and a low rate of participation by civil society in the development process. The administration's capacity is limited because it lacks the resources it needs to intervene, owing to the persistent financial difficulties the country has been experiencing for several years. The population has demonstrated strong organizational capabilities at the local level, but this potential is not being fully utilized in the service of a participatory development process. In addition to these problems, there is the major challenge of consolidating the peace process in the northern part of the country. The primacy of law and democracy, the touchstones of the political system that is being introduced, has yet to be consolidated.

10. Faced with these constraints, the Government, with the support of its partners, has developed a voluntarist strategy with four key, complementary aspects:

(a) Lasting economic recovery and growth. The aim is to achieve greater mobilization of public revenue by improving the allocation of public resources to benefit priority social sectors and basic infrastructure and by continuing the State's withdrawal from production activities while promoting the development of a competitive private sector. Particular attention is to be paid to subregional integration in the context of the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU) and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). The growth target is 4.3 per cent per year for the period 1997-1999, or real per capita income growth of the order of 1 per cent per year. These policies have International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank support;

(b) Combating poverty. The Government is aiming first of all to develop viable means of existence for the population as a whole. Improving food security is the core of the national plan, with improved organization of rural society, intensification and diversification of production, and development of effective funding and marketing mechanisms. Priority is given to improving social services so that they meet the essential needs of the population, with a particular effort to combat AIDS. Special attention is also paid to implementing the policy on the advancement of women, adopted in 1996, and the recommendations of the Fourth World Conference on Women. The national authorities likewise attach importance to developing a genuine population policy and strengthening family planning;

(c) Environmental conservation. Here, as a complement to the strategy for combating poverty, the aim is to preserve biodiversity and natural resources - particularly in terms of land, water and tree species - and ensure rational management of those resources, and in so doing help to achieve the goal of food security;

(d) Enhancement of economic management capacities and promotion of good governance. The Government intends first of all to enhance the capacity of the public services to manage the public finances and monitor development programmes. The Government also plans to pursue vigorously a policy of decentralization and of strengthening the civil society organizations that participate in the development process. This effort goes hand in hand with consolidating democratic institutions and strengthening the rule of law. Also, a series of rehabilitation and readaptation measures and programmes have been planned in order to consolidate the peace process in the northern part of the country.

II. RESULTS AND LESSONS OF PAST COOPERATION

11. During the previous programming cycle, 1992-1996, UNDP assistance was structured around four main themes: (a) environmental management and natural resources conservation; (b) human resources development; (c) enhancement of economic management capacities; and (d) promotion of the private sector.

12. UNDP support gave rise to a number of significant results. In the area of natural resources management, UNDP action strengthened capacities in the areas of land management and water resources planning. It also resulted in considerable transfers of technology. In the area of economic management, UNDP

contributions resulted in the production of essential data for economic policy formulation and monitoring. On the other hand, efforts to promote the private sector have thus far produced few lasting effects.

13. Since 1995, UNDP has provided significant support to the Government in the areas of policy dialogue and improvement of aid coordination, at a time when the country was facing major political and economic upheavals. UNDP facilitated the discussions between the Government and its partners following the 1996 coup d'état, and has supported the national authorities' efforts towards democratization and consolidation of the peace process in the northern part of the country. UNDP played a key role with the development partners in helping to formulate the policies and strategies which now serve as frameworks for joint action. It should also be noted that UNDP provided essential inputs for the debate on poverty elimination and the preparation of the round-table meeting in Geneva in March 1998.

14. The mid-term review of the UNDP cooperation programme conducted at the end of 1995 drew important lessons for the preparation of this cooperation framework. UNDP support suffered from a significant dispersion of initiatives in both sectoral and geographical terms, making such initiatives hard to monitor and causing their impact to fall short of expectations. UNDP assistance should be oriented more towards building the capacities of the grass-roots population. Moreover, the implementation of national execution has been hindered by the lack of procedural expertise. National execution must be undertaken carefully and must be accompanied by the development of mechanisms to strengthen national execution capacities. In this connection, UNDP should continue to call upon the support of the specialized agencies of the United Nations system where necessary.

III. SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS

15. From 1991 to mid-1998, the Niger experienced a series of highly exceptional social and political events. During this period the foundations for a modern, democratic regime were laid for the first time since independence. The new political institutions established in this context enabled the country to join the group of democratic African countries very quickly. The speed with which these institutions were introduced led to a series of political gridlocks at the highest level of the State apparatus, culminating in the military coup d'état at the end of January 1996. Since then, the main parties involved, on both the political and social levels, have been trying to agree on a minimum set of political ground rules, without which no political stability can be foreseen for the country. UNDP has been particularly active in maintaining a fruitful dialogue on governance between the Niger and its external partners, sometimes in difficult conditions, with special attention to electoral processes.

16. In this exceptional context, the Government is aware that UNDP support has had to adjust to the concerns, most often short-term, of the various Governments that have led the country during this period. Successive Governments have appreciated the determination with which UNDP has continued its assistance, thus enabling the Niger to develop and adopt the development strategies, policies and programmes that today form the backbone of the country's development policy.

Moreover, UNDP has played a preponderant role within the community of external partners.

17. Out of this complex and sensitive situation has grown a partnership between the Government and UNDP that is particularly dynamic and very broad in scope. It is therefore natural and normal that at the end of such a period the Government does not want to see UNDP withdraw from a number of areas of cooperation, nor does it want UNDP to play too restricted a role, although it recognizes that in some cases UNDP will essentially act as a catalyst in mobilizing resources and coordinating inputs from abroad.

IV. PROPOSED STRATEGY AND THEMATIC AREAS

18. The Government hopes that UNDP support will be provided for national capacity-building for sustainable human development (SHD) and the elimination of poverty.

19. UNDP cooperation is needed at three levels: (a) continued support for strengthening capacities to coordinate assistance and mobilize resources. The round table of March 1998 will be followed by sectoral and thematic consultations; (b) UNDP assistance is also needed for continuing dialogue on general trends following the commitments undertaken at world summits. UNDP support will be essential for the implementation of the United Nations Special Initiative on Africa, the Joint and Co-sponsored United Nations Programme on HIV and AIDS (JCP/UNAIDS) and various United Nations conventions, including those relating to the environment. The continuation of UNDP assistance in consolidating the peace process in the northern part of the country and coordinating reintegration and rehabilitation programmes for refugees and ex-combatants would likewise be very desirable; (c) UNDP would need to assist in the implementation of national development programmes in the priority SHD areas. The Government hopes that UNDP will make a practical contribution to the implementation of each of these programmes, combining strategic support with action targeted on priority objectives for demonstration purposes.

20. The UNDP activities requested have been selected with a view to making the best use of its comparative advantages and accumulated experience, at the same time bearing in mind the necessary complementarity with contributions from other development partners. The Government hopes that UNDP will contribute to four priority SHD areas: (a) enhancement of food security and local production capacity; (b) environmental conservation; (c) promotion of private initiative, micro-enterprises and employment; and (d) enhancement of economic management capacities and promotion of good governance.

21. The proposed areas of activity are highly interdependent and mutually supportive, and the resulting interactions could have a significant impact on SHD. The proposed action on environmental conservation (area b) will have an immediate and direct impact on support for the enhancement of food security (area a). The promotion of private initiative, micro-enterprises and employment (area c), including the development of the "Entreprendre au Niger" structure, will benefit the initiatives aimed at diversifying economic activity, which were also contained in area (a) of the country cooperation framework. Action taken

in the context of area (d) - decentralization, good governance and strengthening the capacities of civil society - will be helpful to activities in other areas aimed at strengthening the capacity of local communities to manage their own development, promoting private initiative and developing viable economic activities.

A. Enhancement of food security and local production capacity

22. UNDP assistance will be sought in pursuit of the central objective of food security. UNDP, which supported the preparation of the national programme, is particularly well placed, owing to its terms of reference and its previous experience, to contribute to the attainment of this objective in selected rural areas, in partnership with the local population and local associations.

23. UNDP assistance is required to support local initiatives aimed at promoting sustainable growth in agricultural food production, improved livestock-raising techniques, the better use of timber resources and the development of village water supplies.

24. UNDP assistance will be used to strengthen the capacity of local associations and village cooperatives in the management of local development, thus ensuring that the assistance will have a lasting impact.

25. These initiatives will be undertaken on the basis of the experience acquired in connection with rural development programmes implemented in cooperation with the United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF) and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in the Mayahi and N'Guigmi areas and with the International Labour Office (ILO) in the Zinder region, in support of the cooperative movement. Particular emphasis will be placed on support for women's groups, thus promoting the closer integration of women into the community development process. The necessary interaction will be established with the basic activities undertaken in the same areas by United Nations bodies and specialized agencies (United Nations Population Fund, World Health Organization and United Nations Children's Fund).

26. The impact of UNDP cooperation will be measured in the areas selected by the improvements in food security, access to water, living conditions and level of living. A whole range of quantitative indicators will be developed.

B. Environmental conservation

27. Together with its contribution to enhancing food security under the national poverty action programme, UNDP assistance is needed to support the national environment plan for sustainable development. In addition to strategic support for the finalization and implementation of the National Plan, UNDP assistance should focus on sustainable water resources management and efforts to combat desertification.

28. Rational water resources management is of prime importance for the Niger and is a prerequisite for the continuing success of efforts to attain food security and sustainable improvement of the population's living conditions. When the central water plan is implemented, UNDP support will be required, alongside that of the Netherlands, in continuing activity on developing the Signer geographic information system.

29. UNDP will also be asked to help adapt the institutional and legal framework so that water management units, and the decentralized structures governing them, can be established. Some water management units will be set up as pilot projects. The transfer of responsibility from State structures to users and civil society will be facilitated by strengthening the capacities of those involved.

30. As regards action on desertification, pilot activities and model schemes will be organized with UNDP support in the areas of land reclamation, soil and water conservation and agricultural forestry.

31. The impact of UNDP cooperation will be measured by the degree of improvement in the capacity of the various partners, at the level of both national structures and local organizations, to manage water resources and combat desertification in the interest of sustainable development.

C. Promotion of private initiative, micro-enterprises and employment

32. UNDP will contribute to the national programme for the promotion of the private sector at two levels. First, UNDP will be asked to help the national administration to create a favourable environment for development of the private sector and to support the creation of structures representing that sector, in order to promote dialogue and cooperation with the State. The focus will be on strengthening social and work-related organizations and women's economic interest groups and on increasing the participation of women entrepreneurs.

33. Second, UNDP will help to promote micro-enterprises and employment by strengthening and perpetrating the "Entreprendre au Niger" structure. This would involve providing micro-entrepreneurs with the technical assistance they need to establish or develop their enterprises and create jobs; helping them to obtain financing through close cooperation with the banking system and decentralized credit systems; and participating in investment follow-up.

34. The impact of UNDP cooperation will be measured by the progress made in enhancing the capacities of the structures representing the private sector, rendering them functional and effective, in implementing a set of regulatory measures to promote the development of private initiative and in creating and developing a network of viable, employment-generating micro-enterprises. Quantified goals for funding granted and jobs created will be established, and progress will be monitored.

D. Enhancement of economic management capacities and promotion of good governance

35. The Government hopes that UNDP will provide targeted support for each of the three components of the national programme for enhancing economic management capacities and promotion of good governance: enhancement of development management capacities, modernization of public administration in the context of decentralization, and promotion of good governance.

36. UNDP support for development management will seek to consolidate past achievements, particularly in the areas of planning, investment programming, coordination of assistance and statistical information.

37. With respect to administrative modernization, there will be a need for UNDP assistance in restructuring the national administration and strengthening its capacities as part of the process of decentralizing of public services and administration.

38. In the area of good governance, UNDP support will be requested in order to strengthen the electoral processes, particularly at the local level, and to improve Parliament's capacity to assume its legislative role. UNDP assistance will also facilitate action aimed at strengthening the key organizations of civil society, including independent media, representative trade unions, women's organizations and human rights groups. Lastly, UNDP is asked to continue assisting the consolidation of the peace process in the northern part of the country by supporting the development of regional programmes and facilitating mobilization of the necessary resources.

V. MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS

39. The activities supported by UNDP will apply the programme approach and be integrated into national development programmes. UNDP participates in the steering committees established as part of each national programme, which include representatives of the administration, donors and civil society in order to ensure the best possible coordination of, and follow-up to, the activities.

40. National execution will be developed in a judicious, progressive manner, in accordance with the need for efficiency and responsibility and bearing in mind the real capacity of the national public services and the capacity of UNDP itself to provide the necessary assistance. Specific support and supervision for national programme management structures will be provided through, inter alia, targeted training, particularly in the area of administrative and financial procedures. UNDP activities will be audited annually.

41. The specialized agencies of the United Nations system will be called upon to assist government bodies with programme execution. These include the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the International Labour Office (ILO) in the area of food security, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs with respect to rational water management, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) and ILO in the case of the programme for the promotion of the private sector and the Department of Economic and

Social Affairs and the United Nations Office for Project Services in the area of economic management. In particular, national and subregional bodies will be involved in programme implementation. Emphasis will also be placed on technical cooperation between developing countries. Specialists and organizers from the United Nations Volunteers programme will likewise be consulted.

42. Monitoring and review of projects supported by UNDP will be handled by the relevant national programme mechanisms. In order to facilitate assessment of the impact of UNDP cooperation, specific indicators and quantified objectives will be established in order to measure the progress achieved and developments will be kept under review.

43. UNDP resources should continue to serve as a catalyst for the mobilization of resources for national programmes and priorities, and UNDP support will be essential to the mobilization of resources in the context of the round-table process.

44. The Government has requested UNDP assistance in obtaining additional resources from various funds and programmes, including those administered by UNDP. These include the United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF), which was to raise US$ 6 million for activities related to food security and support for local communities; the Office to Combat Desertification and Drought (UNSO) and Capacity 21, in the field of environmental conservation, and the Global Environment Facility (GEF). UNDP action will also benefit from cost-sharing by bilateral and multilateral donors.

45. Resource mobilization targets for the period 1999-2001 are presented in detail in the annex to this document.

Annex

RESOURCE MOBILIZATION TARGET TABLE FOR THE NIGER
(1999-2001)

(In thousands of United States dollars)

Source	Amount	Comments
UNDP CORE FUNDS		
Estimated carry-over for 1999	1 685	
TRAC 1.1.1	10 579	Assigned immediately to the country.
TRAC 1.1.2	0 to 66.7 per cent of TRAC 1.1.1	This range of percentages is presented for initial planning purposes only. The actual assignment will depend on the availability of high-quality programmes. Any increase in the range of percentages would also be subject to availability of resources.
SPPD/STS	900	
Subtotal	13 164[a]	
NON-CORE FUNDS		
Government cost-sharing	-	
Sustainable development funds: GEF	2 000	
Third-party cost-sharing	1 000	
Funds administered by UNDP, trust funds and others funds: - UNCDF - Capacity 21 - UNV	6 750 of which: 6 000 500 250	
Subtotal	9 750	
GRAND TOTAL	22 914[a]	

[a] Not inclusive of TRAC 1.1.2, which is allocated regionally for subsequent country application.

Abbreviations: GEF = Global Environment Facility; SPPD = support for policy and programme development; STS = support for technical services; TRAC = target for resource assignment from the core; UNCDF = United Nations Capital Development Fund; UNV = United Nations Volunteers.